

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4625

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FROM AMBASSADOR FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO AND ASST. SECRETARY DAVIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PFOR ET US

SUBJECT: F5E PROCUREMENT FOR ETHIOPIA

REFS: (A) ADDIS 4510; (B) STATE 281377 (24/2226ZDEC74);
(C) STATE 019954 (28/2047ZJAN75)

SUMMARY. I AM INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER ABSENCE ANY DECISION TO FIRM UP INTRODUCTION OF THE F5E AIRCRAFT INTO ETHIOPIA THIS SUMMER. IN LIGHT OF THE STRONG DIRG DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PACE OF ARMS DELIVERIES REPORTED IN REF A, THE CENTRALITY OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA, THE HIGH-LEVEL ASSURANCES GIVEN THE THEN AMBASSADOR (NOW FONMIN) KIFLE WODAJO LAST DECEMBER AND JANUARY (CF REFS B AND C), AND THE RADICAL INFLUENCE OF ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE OFFICERS WITHIN THE DIRG, I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE ADVERSE POTENTIAL WHICH ANY SLIPPAGE WOULD ENTAIL AND STRONGLY URGE THAT THE NECESSARY STEPS BE TAKEN TO INTRODUCE THE F5E HERE THIS SUMMER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STATEMENTS WHICH DIRG CHAIRMAN BG TEFERI BANTI MADE TO ME (REF A), EVEN WHEN STRIPPED OF GAMESMANSHIP AND TACTICAL EXAGGERATIONS, REVEAL A SUSPICION BORN OF IDEOLOGY AND INSECURITY WITH RESPECT TO US INTENTIONS TOWARDS THE EPMG WHICH WE MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY AND WORK TO MITIGATE IF OUR POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH
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THIS COUNTRY ARE TO BE RESTORED TO HEALTH. IT SEEMS ALL TOO CLEAR

THAT ANY AMERICAN DECISION TO DEFER THE INTRODUCTION OF F5E AIRCRAFT BEYOND NEXT SUMMER WOULD BE PERCEIVED AS A FURTHER INDICATION OF AMERICAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS THE EPMG. THIS WOULD BE ALL THE MORE TRUE IN LIGHT OF THE STRONG ASSURANCES ON THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS AIRCRAFT THIS SUMMER WHICH FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO FEELS HE RECEIVED FOLLOWING HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH YOU AND OSD/ISA ELLSWORTH IN DEFENSE LAST JANUARY.

2. IN CONSIDERING WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO AVOID EXACERBATING THE LEAD TIME AND OTHER MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE GENERATED THE ATTITUDES SET FORTH ABOVE, YOU WILL WISH ALSO TO BEAR IN MIND THAT THE ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE, ON THE RECORD, HAS BEEN A FOCUS OF RADICALISM THROUGHOUT THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION AND THAT SOME OF ITS LEADING LIGHTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE DIRG (E.G. CAPT. SISSAYE HABTE, CHAIRMAN OF DIRG POLITICAL SUBCOMMITTEE AND MEMBER OF THE DIRG'S INNER CORE, AS WELL AS THE EAF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, COL. BERHANU) ARE KNOWN TO BE IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE FACTION WHICH ADVOCATES AN ACTIVE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES TO THE AMERICAN MILITARY CONNECTION. IN SHORT, AIR FORCE MODERNIZATION IN ETHIOPIA'S CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES IS AN AREA TO WHICH EXTRAORDINARY POLITICAL SENSITIVITY ATTACHES AND THEREFORE ONE IN WHICH UNANTICIPATED DELAYS COULD COST US HEAVILY.

3. I ACCORDINGLY STRONGLY URGE THAT SLIPPAGE IN THE ARRIVAL OF THE F5E BE AVOIDED AND STEPS TAKEN TO SATISFY AS BEST WE CAN THE EXPECTATIONS WHICH RESULTED FROM KIFLE WODAJO'S CONSULTATIONS OF LAST DECEMBER AND JANUARY.

4. I UNDERSTAND THAT AFTER SEVERAL IN-DEPTH STUDIES BY DEFENSE IN AN ATTEMPT TO LOCATE F5E'S FOR ETHIOPIA THIS SUMMER, IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOURCE OF AIRCRAFT WAS THE 21 KOREP MAP F5E' NOW BEING DIVERTED TO CHINA. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THESE AIRCRAFT ARE TO BE PLACED IN "LIKE NEW" CONDITION BY THE CHINESE AND RETURNED TO USG CONTROL BEGINNING IN JULY THIS YEAR.

5. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT, AFTER CONSIDERABLE DEBATE, THE OSD POSITION HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT THE 21 AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO KOREA. I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THE LOGIC IN

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THAT DECISION. NO ONE IS MORE AWARE THAN I OF THE DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS INVOLVED IN INFORMING A MAP RECIPIENT OF A DELAY IN RECEIPT OF ANTICIPATED MATERIAL. HOWEVER, TWO RECENT EVENTS WOULD SEEM TO IMPINGE UPON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE RECENT DECISION TO ALLOW KOREA TO ACQUIRE THE BAILED USAF F4D SQ WILL ENHANCE THEIR CAPABILITIES SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THEIR PLANNED PROGRAM, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THE STRESSES HERE HAVE RISEN TO THE POINT WHERE I AM SERIOUSLY CONCERNED.

THE PROBLEM HERE COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALLEVIATED IF A WAY COULD BE FOUND TO DIVERT THE FIRST SIX OF THE 21 AIRCRAFT TO ETHIOPIA DURING JULY-AUGUST 1975. FROM HERE IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE ACQUISITION OF AN UNANTICIPATED F4 SQUADRON BY THE KOREANS WOULD MAKE DELAY IN THE DELIVERY OF ONLY SIX F5E AIRCRAFT (PENDING AVAILABILITY OF NEW PRODUCTION) MORE PALATABLE TO THE KOREANS.

6. I ASK THAT YOU CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE PROBLEM WE HAVE IN ETHIOPIA. I BELIEVE THAT A DECISION NOT TO EXPEDITE THE DELIVERY OF SIX F5E'S OF THE PENDING FMS CASH PURCHASE OF 16 F5E'S TO ETHIOPIA SHOULD BE MADE ONLY AFTER THE MOST THOROUGH ANALYSIS AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE RAMIFICATIONS SUCH A DECISION COULD HAVE.
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